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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3690  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 1526  
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 1862  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0538  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0810  
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2519  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 0952  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4114  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1615  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1460  
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEAHLG/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 000657

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, INR/IAA, PM, DRL, G/TIP;  
NSC FOR SHANNON; SECDEF FOR OSD/ISA AND OSD/ISP;  
JOINT STAFF FOR J-5; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD;  
TREASURY FOR OASIA-J LEVINE; STATE PASS USTR;  
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USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [DR](#) [HA](#) [EXIM](#) [SNAR](#) [KCOR](#) [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [ETRD](#)  
MASS, SENV  
SUBJECT: DOMINICAN PRESIDENT FERNANDEZ ON HAITI, BORDER  
ASSESSMENT, INVITATION TO POTUS

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 0333 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Hans Hertell for Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: On February 16 President Fernandez told the Ambassador he expects Haitian President-elect Preval will pay his first foreign visit to the Dominican Republic. Fernandez expressed keen interest in the possibility of President Bush's attendance at a May 30-31 regional summit in Santo Domingo, noting it presented an opportunity to rebut the idea that the United States is "losing" Latin America. He also confirmed his interest in USG suggestions for improved administration of the border with Haiti and asked for a briefing for cabinet members. End summary.

12. (C) President Fernandez received the Ambassador February 16 to discuss Dominican-Haitian relations, the Southcom-coordinated border assessment, and the Dominican invitation to President Bush for a regional summit in Santo Domingo in May. DCM, DATT, and political officer accompanied. Septels report discussion of a possible Exim-financed sale of patrol boats and the USG request for donations to efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Haiti  
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13. (C) Fernandez found the resolution of the electoral impasse in Haiti to be "excellent." The Ambassador encouraged Fernandez to take advantage of the opportunity to improve relations and understanding with Haiti and emphasized

that the United States wants the two countries to cooperate on common interests, such as fighting terrorism. Dominican Ambassador Jose Serulle Ramia had informed Fernandez on February 15 that Preval's first foreign visit as president-elect would be to the Dominican Republic. Fernandez said he and Preval had worked closely together on bilateral issues during their first administrations. The Ambassador suggested that the two countries revive their binational commission, established in the late 1990s to deal with migration and other issues.

¶4. (C) Fernandez mentioned his "excellent" meeting with Haitian students at a Dominican university (PUCMM) in Santiago on February 10. A student had spoken out "respectfully but solemnly" about "some abuses which are committed against Haitian students" -- "details" which are easy for a chief executive to overlook, such as illegal charges levied by border guards and a requirement that the students return to Haiti every three months to renew tourist visas at considerable cost. "Everything he said was right," commented Fernandez. He said he was ordering the issuance of one-year renewable student visas and cessation of illegal monetary assessments on the students when they cross the border.

#### Border Assessment

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¶5. (C) The Ambassador asked Fernandez about the USG interagency border assessment, prepared last year at the latter's request. The Ambassador noted the culture of corruption among border officials allows all sorts of contraband to enter the country and deprives the Dominican Government of millions of dollars in tax revenue. The Ambassador said that recent proposals by senior Dominican military officers about border administration differ from the U.S. recommendations. The Dominican military propose to keep the border force within the military chain of command -- thus, the Ambassador commented, preserving corrupt influences. He urged Fernandez to have the new border security force report through a civilian authority to the president. The Ambassador further noted that the Dominican military response does not address issues of social and economic development or issues of administration of justice.

¶6. (C) The DCM pointed to the example of the U.S. Border Patrol, an entity with enforcement authority but subject to DHS controls (and, when necessary, sanctions). The Ambassador urged that Dominican authorities require identification of persons crossing the border and adopt modern information technology for this. The DATT suggested establishing a joint working group with a one-year mandate to plan the implementation of the recommendations in all their complexity.

¶7. (C) Fernandez cited the political sensitivity of any public announcement that might provoke nationalistic criticisms from some Dominicans -- even though he had requested the assessment. He acknowledged the usefulness of sharing the information in the assessment. Fernandez agreed as a first step to attend a joint Embassy-Presidency briefing on the assessment and recommendations for at least 10 of his top advisers in early March.

#### Invitation to POTUS for Regional Summit

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¶8. (C) Regarding the invitation to President Bush to attend a regional summit here May 30-31 (reftel), the Ambassador recommended that the Dominican Republic confirm the attendance of the other heads of state from Mexico, Colombia, and Central America. The Ambassador also suggested that the agenda might include topics in addition to energy.

¶9. (C) Fernandez said he would promote the Santo Domingo summit during a Panama regional summit in March and said that perhaps leaders at that meeting might make a collective invitation to President Bush. He reaffirmed his strong

interest in hosting President Bush, including for an official bilateral visit. Fernandez said the Santo Domingo event could help rebut critics who claim that "the United States is losing Latin America." Fernandez said that the Dominican Republic could be highlighted as a country that has quickly overcome financial crisis via a friendly strategy of negotiations with international creditors and compliance with an IMF program.

HERTELL